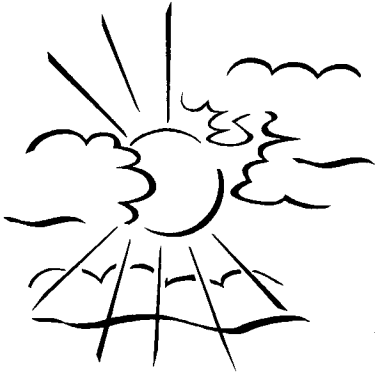


***Department
of
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*Important story at this spot

Articles in Today's Clips

Tuesday, April 4, 2006

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

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Parents face police crackdown

In effort to target spike in juvenile crime, Detroit will step up enforcement of responsibility rule.

Oralandar Brand-Williams / The Detroit News

April 4, 2006

DETROIT -- Detroit police on Monday announced a plan to step up enforcement of the city's little-used parental responsibility ordinance to help curb a 25 percent increase in juvenile crime in 2005.

"There are a certain number of apathetic parents who increasingly resign to accept their child's behavior as kids being kids, and our community has begun to suffer," Detroit Police Chief Ella Bully-Cummings said at a news conference Monday.

"We also know that there are some parents who turn a blind eye because they benefit from the criminal acts of their children ... through cash and stolen merchandise ...

"This is absolutely unacceptable."

Under the ordinance, enacted in 1987 but seldom enforced, parents could face up to \$500 in fines, 90 days in jail or both for failing to maintain control of their children.

The number of arrests involving Detroit youth climbed from 1,482 in 2004 to 1,853 last year -- a 25 percent increase, according to police. Crimes range from stolen cars to murder, said police officials.

Last week, Detroit police cited several parents under the parental responsibility ordinance after 25 students were arrested for protesting conditions at Mackenzie High School on the city's west side. The parents were given tickets when they went to the police station at Grand River and Schaefer to pick up their children.

Wilma Furniss, a parent who received a ticket because her 14-year-old daughter was among those students detained during the walkout at Mackenzie, said while she doesn't believe it was fair for police to ticket her, she does agree with stepped-up enforcement of the ordinance overall.

"If (the kids) are out there doing wrong, the parents should take responsibility," said Furniss.

Bully-Cummings warned parents that "you cannot wash your hands of your child."

Parents must know where their children are at all times and the activities in which they are involved, she said.

The police chief was joined at Monday's news conference by 36th District Court Chief Judge Marilyn Atkins and several officials from social services agencies, such as the Children's Aid Society, which assists troubled youths and their families.

Atkins praised the stepped-up enforcement of the city's parental responsibility ordinance.

"We stand 100 percent behind (Bully-Cummings)," said Atkins. "It helps all of us. It helps not only the parents but it helps our community, our children and everyone."

Bully-Cummings said parents will get a warning for their child's first offense. A second offense will result in a ticket and a court appearance.

Dr. Carl Taylor, a Michigan State University criminologist and sociologist, said lazy parents are to blame for some of the problems.

"These parents are lazy, and they teach their children that nobody can talk to them" or tell them what to do, said Taylor.

Taylor added enforcing the ordinance is a step in the right direction for city of Detroit officials and it will be a "wake-up call" for a lot of parents.

You can reach Oralandar Brand-Williams at (313) 222-2027 or bwilliams@detnews.com.

Published April 2, 2006
[From the Lansing State Journal]

Detroit plans to punish parents of repeat offenders Police to enforce statute to fight rise in juvenile crimes

Associated Press

DETROIT - City police and 36th District Court judges plan to begin enforcing a parental responsibility statute as part of an effort to combat an increase in the number of juvenile crimes in the last year.

The statute has been on the books since 1987, the Detroit Free Press reported Saturday. If a parent of a lawbreaking youth is found to be repeatedly negligent in parental duties, they could face up to 90 days in jail and a \$500 fine.

"It's not the police department's responsibility to raise somebody's child," Chief Ella Bully-Cummings said. "We're just trying to make parents responsible for a duty that is not only required by law, but by nature."

In most cases, Bully-Cummings said parents will be warned after a first offense.

Dozens of cities across the country have such statutes, the newspaper said. In the Detroit area, the suburbs of Dearborn, Taylor, Warren and Southfield have so-called parental responsibility ordinances.

Detroit's statute has been used mostly for truancy and curfew violations in the past, said police spokesman James Tate.

Following the arrest of 32 Mackenzie High School students on Wednesday, Tate said some parents were to be charged under the statute. The students were protesting about what they said were chronic shortages of books, poor sanitation and a uniform requirement.

About 125 to 200 of Mackenzie's 1,700 students walked out of the school. The 23 students who were 16 or younger received disorderly conduct tickets, while the nine who were 17 and older face charges.

Dear Parents ...

The police chief has a message about your duties

April 4, 2006

Detroit Police Chief Ella Bully-Cummings and 36th District Court judges are obviously trying to send a message with their vow to start enforcing a little-used parental responsibility statute that would punish parents for the offenses of their children. The message that parents ought to take responsibility for their kids is a good one, as long it's tempered with reality.

Under a law that has been on the books since 1987, parents found to be repeatedly negligent when their children break the law face up to 90 days in jails and up to \$500 in fines.

Dozens of cities, including Chicago and Cincinnati, have similar parental responsibility laws, but they've had limited success, even in communities with far more resources than Detroit. Proving that parents were negligent is difficult and requires extra investigation and money, and this city doesn't have enough investigators to arrest the primary perpetrators of its most violent crimes.

Moreover, even when police can prove negligence, arresting or fining parents is not necessarily the best route. Most children in Detroit come from single-family homes. What happens to them when a custodial parent, usually the mother, is arrested or even slapped with a fine she can't pay?

In most cases, parents do their best but often are overwhelmed. It's not surprising that peer pressure takes over as a primary influence. Sometimes, parents are afraid of their own kids.

That said, Cummings is right that many parents need to do a better job of raising and guiding their offspring.

It shouldn't take a law to do that. But with a 25% increase in juvenile crime last year, maybe the law will at least remind parents that they are largely responsible for what happens to their children and who they become.

Teen accused of sexually assaulting 2-year-old

Tuesday, April 4, 2006

By Rex Hall Jr.

rhall@kalamazoogazette.com 388-7784

A 13-year-old Grand Rapids boy was arrested Sunday in South Haven for allegedly sexually assaulting a 2-year-old girl, authorities said.

Police were called early Sunday night to South Haven Community Hospital to investigate a possible incidence of child abuse, Police Chief Rod Somerlott said. During their investigation, they determined that a sexual assault had occurred and later contacted the teen in Covert, according to a news release.

The boy, who was not identified by police, was questioned and then arrested for first-degree criminal sexual conduct, police said. He was released to his parents.

Somerlott said today that his department will forward the case to the Van Buren County prosecutor for charges.

Man who kidnapped girl, 14, gets 25 years

Adrian teen forced into prostitution

Tuesday, April 04, 2006

By The Associated Press and Ann Arbor News Staff

An Inkster man was sentenced Monday to 25 years in prison on federal charges of kidnapping a 14-year-old girl in 2001 from an apartment in Ypsilanti Township and forcing her to engage in prostitution at an Indiana truck stop.

Clarence Howard Brown, 33, had been convicted of kidnapping, transportation of a minor with intent to engage in criminal sexual activity and sex trafficking offenses. He was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Arthur J. Tarnow.

Evidence presented during Brown's trial showed he raped the girl twice and subjected her to other physical abuse, U.S. Attorney Stephen J. Murphy said in a statement.

The girl's 18-day ordeal, which also took her to Ohio and Pennsylvania, ended when she was rescued by a female trucker who took her to her home in Adrian.

Brown was aided by his girlfriend, Holly Marie Hollis, about 26, of Ypsilanti, who pleaded guilty to similar charges in August and later was sentenced to nearly four years in prison, Murphy said.

The case dates back to 2001, when a 14-year-old girl left Michigan with her boyfriend to travel to Toledo for a movie and to visit his relatives, a federal affidavit said. She eventually returned to an Ypsilanti Township townhouse with acquaintances known to her boyfriend, and after an argument, the boyfriend left, documents said.

The girl said Brown and Hollis offered her a ride home, then drove instead to Fort Wayne, Ind., where she was held in a hotel for nearly a week and forced to perform sex acts at a truck stop, documents said. She said Brown raped her twice, and another man held a knife to her throat during a separate incident.

The girl eventually told a female truck driver what was occurring, and the woman drove her back to Michigan to reunite her with her family, documents said.

Psychiatric exam set

Tuesday, April 04, 2006

The Grand Rapids Press

MONTCALM COUNTY --

A Greenville woman charged with murder in the death of her 3-month-old daughter will have a psychiatric evaluation. The determination was made during a pre-trial hearing for Grace Vivian Hunt. She was scheduled to appear in court today for a probable cause hearing in which the prosecution would lay out the evidence against her. Jadelyn Schenden died in January; authorities brought charges last month against the 23-year-old mother. If convicted, Hunt faces up to life in prison.

Ann Arbor News Letters

April 4, 2006

Look deeper for answers on child abuse, neglect

I don't have much confidence in reducing child abuse and neglect as long as we have politically correct sociologists and other social "professionals" diagnosing the causes and identifying the solutions ("Let's look for answers on child abuse, neglect," The Ann Arbor News, March 27). The usual suspects are trotted out - poverty and racism - and while these may be contributing factors, maybe the reason for the increase in abuse and neglect is the precipitous decline in faithful two-parent families. Oops, not allowed to suggest that. Maybe the reason is the easy access to pornography in every media venue and the societal attitude that serial sexual encounters are harmless. Oops again. Maybe the reason is the children-as-commodity mentality that makes them items of convenience (i.e. choices) rather than human persons. Another oops. As long as the discussion of these things is taboo I don't have much hope that things will change.

Thomas M. Doran, Plymouth

Granholt Declares "Safe Delivery Day"

Channel 6 News

April 3, 2006, 05:36 PM EDT

In efforts to stop newborn babies being abandoned, Governor Granholt has declared this "safe delivery day." Under Michigan law, a parent can anonymously surrender an infant from birth to 72 hours of age to an emergency service provider. The director of Michigan Community Health says it's an opportunity to spread the word that there are safe places for parents to drop off their infants.

Janet Olszewski, Director of Michigan Dept. of Community Health: "We really want babies delivered to hospitals and law enforcement professionals where the baby can then be cared for."

Since Michigan's safe delivery of newborns law went into effect in 2001, 32 newborns have been safely surrendered.

Lansing State Journal

April 4, 2006

Surrender law has saved 32 babies

State health officials and legislators gathered Monday morning at the Sparrow Professional Building in Lansing to spread the message of Michigan's Safe Delivery of Newborns law. Under the law, a parent can anonymously surrender an infant — from birth to 72 hours of age — to an emergency service provider or an employee of a fire department, hospital or police station who is inside the building and on duty.

“While there are a number of reasons a young, scared parent may abandon a baby, this newborn abandonment phenomenon has led many states to look at how they can prevent these incidents from occurring, thus saving lives,” said Marianne Udow, director of Michigan's Department of Human Services, in a statement.

According to the state's Department of Human Services, 32 newborns have been safely surrendered in Michigan. New signs for safe delivery locations also were unveiled during Monday's news conference. The signs designating hospitals, and fire and police stations as safe sites will be posted statewide in the next couple of months.

NEED TO KNOW

Tuesday, April 04, 2006

Medicare Assistance day

The Area Agency on Aging 1-B will offer a free Medicare Assistance day Friday at the Dexter Senior Citizens Center. The information session will be at 7720 Ann Arbor Road from 10 a.m.-noon. Southeast Michigan people who have enrollment or benefit questions about the Medicare Medicaid Assistance Program can get their questions answered by representatives.

The deadline for beneficiaries to enroll in a prescription coverage plan is May 15.

For more information call 734-426-7737.

Published April 2, 2006

Lansing State Journal

Richard Sullivan: Shouldn't we pay more for those who care for loved ones?

It has been 21 years since my son, John, was struck by lightning at Michigan State University. Many of you may be familiar with our story, but I would guess there's an aspect of this that is new, but will soon become routine.

It is the challenge of caring for a loved one who can no longer care for himself or herself. It is one that many baby boomers soon will grapple with, and, I would guess, that the issues surrounding this may surprise you.

In many cases, the people who take care of our seniors and persons with disabilities in their home have made \$5.15 an hour, or minimum wage. That's less money than most people earn for working at a fast-food restaurant.

Don't get me wrong; I honor anyone who works hard to earn a living. But something is wrong with our system when a person who takes care of those in need - by doing everything from bathing them to feeding them to helping them get their prescriptions - makes the minimum.

In Ingham County, there are more than 600 home health care workers who earn an average of \$6.15 an hour.

Not only do these workers earn the minimum, they also don't receive health insurance or any real benefits to speak of. The result is that the people who provide this service - about 44,000 in Michigan - often leave the job in pursuit of one with higher pay and benefits.

That, in turn, has led to an extremely high turnover rate in the field of home health care work - some 35 percent.

Imagine hiring someone to take care of your grandmother. You both get comfortable with the worker, and then, you have to bring in someone new. It makes an extremely challenging and emotional task that much more trying.

My wife, Marcia, and I, like many of you I would suspect, had no desire to place our son in a nursing home when his accident occurred in 1985. So we took on the burden ourselves.

Between health and legal fees, our family has spent more than \$200,000 taking care of John. We have been near bankruptcy, been forced to shed the family business and

struggled to keep our home. The kindness of others has been the key to our living. For that, we are extremely grateful.

I know our situation and my son's accident don't necessarily fit the norm for many of the state's citizens. But I do know that most of us will soon be charged with finding a way to care for our relatives who are deeply in need.

Please support higher wages and insurance for those persons who provide care in the home. That way the helpers will be there when you need them.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Richard Sullivan's son, John, was struck by lightning in July 1985 while participating in a Big Ten tournament at Michigan State University. John has undergone multiple surgeries, but continues to progress.

Lansing State Journal

April 4, 2006

Man goes on trial in woman's death

A Jackson man charged with murder in the death of his estranged girlfriend is scheduled to stand trial Monday. Paul Gibbs, 49, faces life in prison if convicted of strangling 35-year-old Tammie Sue Dubay of East Lansing in July 2004.

The body of Dubay, who was a paraplegic, was found along a rural Haslett road.

Gibbs was arrested just days after Dubay's body was found, and charged with murder a month later.

A forensic pathologist testified at Gibbs' preliminary hearing that Dubay had underpants shoved in her mouth and an orange electrical cord wrapped five times around her neck when she arrived at the morgue.

From staff and wire reports

Tuesday, April 04, 2006

Detroit News Letters

Should Michigan embrace joint custody?

Parental contact essential

Michigan's recovery must include restoring children's access to both parents by eliminating state policies that have denied more than 2 million children more than token contact with one of their parents -- in effect, government-sponsored child abuse (Tim O'Brien: "Joint custody could improve state's child support efforts," Feb. 28).

Our children suffer long-term developmental, educational and psychological damage.

It is time to focus on repairing the human infrastructure of Michigan and the nation. That requires a serious focus on the family, not just the minority of families that appear to be intact, but also the increasing majority of broken American families.

*Michael T. Ross, M.D.
Troy*

Kids need two parents

You don't need a scorecard to see how advocates will be lining up on state Rep. Leslie Mortimer's proposed legislation that would create a presumption of joint custody in divorce cases for alternating and substantially equal periods of time.

Against the bill will be everyone who gets any money -- and often very substantial amounts of money -- from any part of the current system. They don't want to lose a dime.

For the bill will be the children and noncustodial fathers of divorce along with a few noncustodial mothers. When young adult children of divorce are asked to look back over their lives and voice how things could have been better for them, about 70 percent say that they would have wanted equal or near equal time with their fathers when they were growing up. Nothing could be clearer.

*Gordon E. Finley
Professor of Psychology
Florida International
University
Miami*

Custodial mom insulted

The other side of the child support argument was not addressed in Tim O'Brien's article. This article seemed to favor fathers who routinely do not pay full, adequate, timely child support and disingenuously insulted custodial moms.

It didn't take a court order for these men to make the babies. Responsible men would not require court orders or enforcement if they truly had their children's interests at heart.

Sharon Davis

Ames, Iowa

Stop destroying families

I read with glee that a legislator in Michigan has thrown down the gauntlet where consideration for the equal custody of children is concerned. We the people will run with it. We are those whose lives have been destroyed along with the lives of our children.

Robert Gartner

Houston, Texas

Tuesday, April 04, 2006

A child is waiting

Anthony needs a family to help him progress

Rosemary Dorr / Special to The Detroit News

Never shy at talking, 12-year-old Anthony politely gives some highlights about himself. "I like to read jokes in the paper and read about dogs. I like animals. My favorite's the white tiger. I love basketball and football, and I like biking and skateboarding. I don't like to be forgotten (overlooked)."

Getting a permanent home "would be good," Anthony says with a smile.

Often, though, Anthony struggles with frustrations. He thinks school is "kinda good," but needs a lot of help.

Anthony is in special education classes and also receives tutoring. His therapist notes that he has a severe learning disability and emotional impairment. "He's a kid that can be funny and sweet," she adds. "He does try to learn and is making some baby steps."

Anthony needs a skilled family experienced with special needs children to help him step higher. If you might consider adoption, please talk with Christine Carotenuto at Lutheran Adoption Service, (248) 423-2770, ext. 1116.

Last column's child: Jermia, 11, artistic and athletic, has many strengths, but he needs encouragement. For more information, call Kim Williams at Wayne County Department of Human Services, (313) 396-0239.

A child is waiting appears Tuesdays in Features.

Macomb County

NEWS IN A MINUTE

April 4, 2006

COUNTY-WIDE: Fuel assistance is available for eligible residents

The Macomb County Community Services Agency is offering financial assistance for qualifying low-income residents of Macomb County who use deliverable fuel.

The agency encourages people who may be eligible to contact their nearest Community Action Center. The help is available to residents who meet income guidelines, which vary based on family size, and demonstrate a need for deliverable fuel.

Eligible fuels include fuel oil, propane, wood and coal. The agency would make payments directly to the fuel providers on the behalf of residents.

For more information or to make an appointment, contact a Community Action Center.

Residents living between 14 Mile and 23 Mile, as well as in St. Clair Shores, should call 586-469-6964. Residents north of 23 Mile should call 586-749-5146. All other residents should call 586-759-9150.

By Free Press staff

Michigan Report

March 3, 2006

U.S. SAYS \$15.4 MILLION AVAILABLE FOR HOME WEATHERIZATION

Michigan has been allocated \$15.4 million in federal grants to assist low-income individuals to provide better weatherization of their homes, the U.S. Department of Energy said Monday.

The state's portion is 10 percent of \$140.3 million the department is allocating to 30 states and the Navajo Nation. Totally, in the federal 2005-06 fiscal year, the department said it would allocate \$243 million in weatherization grants, which could help make more than 96,000 houses nationwide more energy efficient.

Homeless man charged in brutal assault of woman

Tuesday, April 04, 2006

By Lisa Medendorp
MUSKEGON CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

A 27-year-old homeless man has been charged with the brutal assault of a Muskegon woman that occurred early Saturday morning in a vacant home in the 200 block of Catherine Avenue. Muskegon police said this morning that the victim, a woman in her 30s, remains hospitalized. The suspect, Earnest Lamont Warren, who provided no address at 60th District Court arraignment Monday, has been charged with assault with intent to do great bodily harm less than murder.

Police said that in addition to being beaten, the woman had been raped. The investigation into the sexual assault is continuing, said Detective Sgt. Monica Shirey. Judge Fredric A. Grimm Jr. set bail at \$500,000 for Warren and scheduled preliminary examination for April 13.

Muskegon police were called to a home in the 300 block of East Isabella Avenue at 3:54 a.m. after the victim went to the residence for help.

Shirey said the woman, who had blood all over her face, hair and hands, came to the door asking for an ambulance. The woman had been kicked in the head and severely beaten.

The woman and Warren, a male acquaintance she knew only by his first name, had left a home in the 1500 block of Jiroch Street earlier, Shirey said. They went to the vacant house on Catherine, apparently to do drugs, Shirey said, and that is where the incident took place.

Warren was later arrested after Officer Jeff Geiger brought him to the police department on an unrelated matter, Shirey said.

Geiger noticed a man on foot in the area of McLaughlin Avenue and Pine Street. The man appeared to be trying to hide something, Shirey said, and Geiger made contact with him. He was holding a purse that turned out to have been inside a car that had been reported stolen the same night, she said.

The suspect claimed to have found the purse. He was taken back to the police department, where another officer who had been working on the assault case felt the purse suspect's description matched that of his suspect, Shirey said. Detective Rick Bleich then "pieced together the case," Shirey said, adding that Warren had blood on his clothing.

Federal cash helps Mich. aid evacuees

State one of 11 to draw funds from \$2 billion pool

By Stacey Range

Lansing State Journal

Published April 2, 2006

Michigan is saving money by tapping into a pot of emergency federal aid for low-income Hurricane Katrina evacuees — one of just 11 states to do so.

Congress created the \$2 billion pool of welfare money in the fall after the hurricane left tens of thousands homeless and scattered nationwide.

Of that, only \$25.48 million has been awarded, according to a recent report by the Washington-based Center for Public Integrity.

While officials in other states say the process is too tedious and not worth the time, those in Michigan say the benefits outweigh the administrative headaches.

“We didn’t want to stress our own funds too much, so it was just prudent to take advantage of all resources available to us,” said Don Mussen, acting director of Family Support Services for the Michigan Department of Human Services.

In Michigan, 162 evacuees have collected \$383,822 of the state’s allotted \$854,000. Any cash left by the end of August goes back to the federal government.

The program is available only to low-income evacuees with at least one child living with them.

Theresa Shepard said she’s glad Michigan is taking advantage of the free funds but thinks more needs to be done to help evacuees without children.

The Holt woman has helped five single men acclimate to the area since they came from New Orleans in September. They’ve received assistance with rent, food and medical care, but Shepard said there is little financial help for them as they struggle to find jobs in a state where unemployment is among the nation’s highest.

“Sometimes these guys just cry because they were brought here where jobs aren’t available and they can’t get help,” she said.

Mussen said his office created a centralized distribution center at the state level. Four or five workers spent about 350 to 400 hours contacting more than 1,200 evacuees who applied in November to determine who qualified.

The federal fund provides one-time lump-sum payments, which have ranged from \$1,840 for a parent and one child to \$5,040 for a family of 10. Families taking the payments cannot continue

getting monthly state welfare benefits.

About 45 families chose to keep receiving monthly benefits instead, Mussen said. Benefits come out of the state's \$390 million pot for all welfare recipients.

Mussen said he hasn't calculated how much administering the program will cost, but he suspects it will be a fraction of the federal money given out rather than using the state's welfare fund.

"Any extra hassle was worth it," he said.

The Associated Press contributed to this report. Contact Stacey Range at 377-1157 or srange@lsj.com.

Bay County's new office director has passion for public service

Tuesday, April 04, 2006

By RYAN J. STANTON
BAY CITY TIMES WRITER

Kathryn Fehrman isn't in it for the money.

In fact, she was making more money in her first year at a private law firm than she's making today as Bay County's chief public defender.

Her job sounds simple enough: defending citizens charged with crimes who can't afford their own attorneys. But there's more to it than meets the eye.

It's not only a right granted by the U.S. Constitution, it's a duty Fehrman takes to heart.

"Representing people charged with crimes, on a personal level, is a very satisfying exercise of the heart and soul," she said. "To be able to look someone in the eye and have them look back, knowing that you're on their side - and make sure that fair things happen - is not only socially satisfying but personally satisfying."

Fehrman was hired in October to head up the new Office of the Public Defender, which will allow the county to handle more work in-house, saving the county hundreds of dollars per defendant.

Fehrman considers the county's five public defenders a dedicated team of professionals who could have chosen other ways to earn more money, instead of public service.

"They care very much about the citizens of Bay County," she said.

Fehrman said she chose public service because she believed she could make a difference.

"As a citizen of the United States, I've been able to fulfill my oath every day as an attorney to uphold the Constitution of the United States," she said, "to ensure that every human being who walks through the front door of that courthouse is getting full representation."

Chief Defense Attorney Mark E. Janer, who heads up the Office of Criminal Defense, said it's an understatement to say Fehrman is a benefit to the county. Already, Fehrman has helped line up two of Cooley's senior law students to work as externs.

"When we get these externs - and Kathy Fehrman is the reason why we're going to - we're going to take on a greater caseload," Janer said. "That will save the county a substantial amount of money."

While she is content in her current job, Fehrman recently threw her hat in the ring for the judgeship being vacated by Saginaw County Circuit Judge Leopold P. Borrello, who retires next Friday.

Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm will make the appointment, and it might help that Fehrman was Granholm's Saginaw County campaign chairwoman in 2002. She also has served on the Governor's Task Force on Children's Justice and the Governor's Finance Committee.

"Whatever happens," Fehrman said, "I will be perfectly satisfied because I love what I'm doing now."

Sunday, April 02, 2006

Progress on DHS building

We are writing in response to The Press' March 21 editorial, "Cramped quarters a disservice to public." We were very disappointed with the divisive tone of the editorial given the spirit of cooperation that exists among the city, county, and state partners now working together to accomplish the relocation of the Kent County Department of Human Services (DHS) offices.

You are correct; this project has been discussed for many years. While we are unable to address efforts made under the previous administration, this administration -- the Department of Management and Budget (DMB) and the Department of Human Services (DHS) -- recognizes this move as a top priority.

Prior to your editorial, at a meeting attended by Rep. Jerry Kooiman, Kent County, the City of Grand Rapids, DMB and DHS (local office, board, and central office), all of the parties approved a conceptual relocation plan.

None of the previous proposals had buy-in from all of those stakeholders -- this plan does.

We are encouraged by our progress, and will move forward with a detailed plan for the proposed location. Before the proposed location is approved, we will solicit input from affected neighborhood associations.

Urban redevelopment and collaboration with local units of government are high priorities for this administration. The State of Michigan has also worked cooperatively with Kent County and the City of Grand Rapids on the redevelopment of the Herpolsheimers Department Store and notably the Michigan Street Development Project. This \$120 million project is expected to create more than 2,000 new jobs.

As we move forward, we would be happy to assist you in accurately informing the public about our progress in relocating the Kent County DHS offices.

LISA WEBB SHARPE
Director
Department of Management and Budget

MARIANNE UDOW
Director
Department of Human Services

Lansing